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Congress of the United States
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January 14, 2008

<http://markudall.house.gov/HoR/Co02/home>

The Honorable Bill Ritter
Governor, State of Colorado
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203-1792

Dear Governor Ritter:

In the days after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, I sent a letter to Governor Bill Owens, commending him, the Colorado National Guard and the state's emergency response units for providing help to Katrina's victims and requesting that he convene a federal-state summit with the leadership of the Colorado General Assembly and the Colorado congressional delegation on Colorado's emergency preparedness.

This letter was a plea to the former governor to evaluate if Colorado was properly prepared to handle catastrophic emergencies. Unfortunately, Governor Owens did not agree to convene such a summit.

In light of the federal audit released by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) last week, I would like to reiterate my request of over two years ago for a federal-state summit. As you know, the audit examines how Colorado spent over \$156 million in federal funds over four fiscal years, ending in October 2006. While some improvements were made over that time, DHS found in general that Colorado's homeland security organization was 'ineffective' and 'provided only minimal assurance that its processes were well controlled or that program funding was allocated in a collaborative and transparent manner.'

I commend your leadership this year, especially your appointment of former Colorado National Guard Adjutant General Mason Whitney to oversee Colorado's homeland security efforts. I am confident that under your and General Whitney's leadership, Colorado's homeland security program is getting on the right track, and I was pleased to learn that stakeholder meetings have already been held statewide to obtain input on a new draft state homeland security strategy.

But I still believe that there is value in bringing together state officials, the Colorado Congressional delegation, representatives of the Department of Homeland Security and federal response agencies early this year to discuss the new state strategy prior to its adoption. I don't believe in duplicating efforts the state has already made, but at the same time, I think Coloradans may wonder – in light of the scathing DHS audit report – whether we are turning every stone at the federal and state levels to plan and provide support for worst-case scenarios.

I stand ready to work with your office and with my colleagues in the Colorado delegation to hold this summit. I look forward to your response and to working with you on this important matter.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Udall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Udall" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Udall
Member of Congress

Cc: Colorado Congressional delegation
Colorado State Senator Peter Groff, President of the Senate
Colorado State Representative Andrew Romanoff, Speaker of the House